

Notices of Books.

VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF SOMERSET, Vol. II. (650pp., maps and illustrations, and indexes to Vols. I and II and Domesday).

After a considerable interval the second volume has been issued to subscribers. The first was reviewed in the *Proceedings*, vol. LII, when attention was drawn as well to the varied articles, as also to the general principles on which the work had been planned. This need not be repeated, so the contents of vol. II can at once be considered.

The first volume contained articles on the natural history, and on the relics of different stages of civilisation down to and inclusive of Domesday. But one article in the later volume should by rights have come before ; it is on "Ancient Earth-works," by Mr. C. H. Bothamley, and runs to 66 pages with a map and many plans. The earth-works are nearly one hundred, and are described in nine classes, though the writer is careful to point out that hard and fast lines cannot be drawn between some of the divisions. It is also important to remember that the earlier printed accounts from their vagueness, want of detail, and it must be added want of knowledge on the part of the investigators, cannot be relied on. Orchard Castle, near Penselwood, and Castle Neroche, near Ilminster, have been removed from "Ancient British" to Norman fortresses, and several ingenious theories thereby dissipated. There is room for unlimited research, but only qualified persons ought to attempt actual digging, for of all others it may be said that what they touch they destroy.

Ecclesiastical History, 67pp., and Religious Houses, 104 pp., making up nearly one-third of the volume, are written by the Chancellor of the Cathedral, T. Scott Holmes, D.D. In this county ancient tradition would carry back the tale to the very beginning of Christianity itself ; and Professor Freeman was the first to show how this "ancient tradition" was really the growth of the twelfth and following centuries, far removed it is true from our own, but much further from the times they purport to record. All this and much more is brought out in the articles. And it may be said at once of all the sections in both volumes that, while certain and more interesting portions may have been treated more fully in divers scattered publications, the different histories have now for the first time been discussed continuously for the whole period. What this means can only be under-

stood by the students who have been obliged to refer to these scattered works, and now find the story brought together into one volume.

The account of the Religious Houses is a sad one, of opportunities wasted, and of no place being found for repentance. To the scanty list of hermitages on p. 69 may be added one located in Broadway village within the forest of Neroche, which flourished about 1300 and for not long afterwards. Collinson states that there was a priory of alien monks, a cell to the Abbey of St. Sever in Normandy, at Yenston in Henstridge. Its endowment fell, like Stogursey, to Eton college. Two additional prioresses may be added to the list for Minchin Buckland from the addenda to the Chartulary (*S.R.S.*, xxv, xxxviii). Alice Reskymer is also commemorated on a fragment of ancient glass in the chancel of Broomfield church; and it is quite likely that the interesting series of shields in that church may have come from the windows of the chapel of Minchin Buckland.

Dr. Holmes also contributes the article on Schools, "the number and antiquity of which give them an important place in the history of the county." In addition to the means of education provided at hand, the Oxford College, founded by Nicholas and Dorothy Wadham, of Merifield, attracted Somerset boys by special opportunities.

The articles on "Political" and "Social and Economic" History by Miss Sandford and Miss G. Bradford are each excellent, the latter bearing on matters that have only recently come to the front, being a mine of new information. It would have been a useful appendix to the first article to have included a more complete list of the sheriffs than can be found in Collinson or the P.O. directory, as the Public Record Office list is not easily accessible. The census returns for each parish from 1801 to 1901 give food for thought, and the figures for 1911, when available, can be added in the margin.

The Maritime History, which includes smuggling, is more interesting than might have been expected. The Bristol Channel was first utilized for the annoyance of the county by the Danes, who either swept down direct by the west coast of Scotland, or started out from Dublin. Stathe in the parish of Stoke St. Gregory on the bank of the Parrett, is a place-name brought from Scandinavia, and familiar enough on the north-east coast for the landing-place. For centuries after pirates or privateers, between whom there was very little difference, infested the Channel and captured the merchantmen of Bristol. But the actual share of the county either in fitting out ships or supplying their crews is small; and it must be content to point to Admiral Blake, Sir Amyas Preston (the hero of La Guayra), Sir Robert Crosse, Lord Rodney, Alexander Hood, Viscount Bridport, and Samuel Hood, Viscount Hood (described by Nelson "as the best officer England has to boast of"), as men of renown in our naval annals.

The Industries are numerous rather than important; some gradually die down, others spring up; while the net result seems to be that a larger number of the people are drawn into factories, and the

population shows a tendency to rise. Cloth-working was perhaps the greatest but has now passed away ; and the same fate has befallen the lead-mining industry, which was taken over by the Romans on their arrival. Coal does better, and stone has not yet given way to reinforced concrete. No industry, however small or intermittent, has missed an account. A note on p. 361, no. 116, is not quite correct. It was Thomas Dare, ex-silversmith of Taunton and secretary to the Duke of Monmouth, who was slain at Lyme Regis by Fletcher of Saltoun (*D.N.B.*, xix, 293b.)

A separate article is devoted to Agriculture. It cannot be said to be written in a very cheerful vein ; but after all food can only be procured from the soil, and with the growth of over-seas population, the rise of freights, and the greater spending power of the community, there should be increasing demand for good farm produce. 'The county sadly lacks the higher means of agricultural education.' This sentence ought to lose its point.

From Agriculture one passes naturally to Forestry which forms the link with Sport. The forests of the county must always have been considered from this latter point of view. The actual woods are small though every traveller from Leland onwards has marked the amount of hedgerow timber, principally elm. Sport is adequately treated, from the ancient and royal stag-hunting down to golf which is slowly ousting the national cricket.

The second volume contains an index to the general articles in the two volumes now issued, and a special index to the Domesday survey in vol. I. In the map accompanying this in vol. I, 432, Holecumbe was omitted ; its position is half-way between Blachesale and Bageberge on the Quantocks.

THE EARLY NORMAN CASTLES OF THE BRITISH ISLES, by Ella S. Armitage (John Murray, 1912 ; large 8vo., pp. xvi, 408, plans and other illustrations ; price 15s. net).

In this book Mrs. Armitage has brought together, with revision, and very considerable additions, the subject matter of papers that have appeared in the *English Historical Review*, the *Antiquary*, and the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*. The main object of the book is to prove, so far as the British Isles are concerned, that the castles and earthworks of what is known as the motte and bailey type are in all cases of Norman origin. The several chapters deal with earthworks in general ; Anglo-Saxon fortifications ; Danish fortifications ; the origin of private castles ; the distribution and characteristics of motte-castles ; the castles of the Normans in England ; motte castles in Wales ; motte-castles in Scotland ; motte-castles in Ireland ; stone castles of the Norman period ; and there are appendices dealing with points of detail. The general line of argument is that fortifications which there is reason to believe are Anglo-Saxon or Danish are different in type from

motte and bailey castles, and were intended to protect a town or camp, or speaking generally a community, whilst a castle was designed in the first place for the protection of an individual. The *burhs* of Ethelfleda and Edward the Elder were not castles, but towns. Castles are not mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* before 1051, but after the Conquest they rapidly became numerous and are frequently mentioned in the *Chronicle*, and by Ordericus and others. Further, when the Pipe Rolls and other documents of the time are examined they are found to contain numerous references to the erection of castles by Norman lords in places where motte and bailey fortifications now exist.

Chapter VII, which makes up more than a third of the book, contains a list of 84 castles, in places where castles are known to have existed in the 11th Century, with a brief description of each of them and notes of the references to them found in the Pipe Rolls, etc.

This chapter, and indeed the book as a whole, represents an enormous amount of patient documentary investigation, and makes available to students of castles a large amount of important information which hitherto has been difficult of access. Not less valuable is the preceding chapter on the distribution and characteristics of motte castles in Europe as a whole.

That Mrs. Armitage makes out her case for a large number of castles cannot be denied. We notice, however, that she gives up the view (which at one time she held somewhat strongly) that the Normans were the inventors of the motte and bailey castle. She now regards the origin of this type of fortress as unknown, but considers it certain that it was a product of feudalism, and could not have come into being until feudalism was well established. Most probably it originated, she thinks, in the old district of Neustria in France.

The chapters on the Welsh, Scotch, and Irish castles follow the same general lines as Chapter VII, and contain much valuable information laboriously unearthed from various documentary sources.

Space does not allow of any detailed or critical examination of Mrs. Armitage's views. We observe however that she persists in the entirely fallacious argument of relative size as a distinguishing feature between feudal castles (assuming motte and bailey castles to be always feudal) and tribal or communal strongholds of prehistoric or historic times. She also over-labours the view that the position of the keep on an outer edge or angle of the fortress was always due to a desire to overawe the occupants of the bailey and to make it easy for the lord and his immediate followers to escape into the country. As a matter of fact that is the only kind of position in which a keep (or a whole castle) has any strategical value even when it is designed as a part of and for the protection of a fortress (or a town). Where, as at Gisors, the keep is placed almost centrally with respect to the other works it becomes almost ineffective as an active part of the defence, and serves only as a final refuge.

One blemish of the book is Mrs. Armitage's anxiety to make disparaging criticisms of the late Mr. G. T. Clark. For example, to say that continental writers "generally get their information from Clark, and it is generally wrong" is neither good taste nor good fact. Clark did a mass of very valuable pioneer work and his critics have entered into his labours. On the architectural and military sides of the question he is still at least as safe a guide as Mrs. Armitage.

The author is not herself free from obsessions. She is so firmly convinced that all motte and bailey castles are Norman that she finds it difficult to avoid the converse proposition, and is prone to imagine the previous existence of a motte in places where there is now no evidence, and from the circumstances of the case no probability that a motte was ever constructed, *e.g.* Chepstow, Exeter, Carlingford.

The book does not profess to refer to all the castles of early Norman date, but some of the omissions are very remarkable. In the case of Somerset we learn nothing about Stogursey or Nether Stowey, Castle Neroche, or Orchard Castle; and Castle Cary is omitted from a reference to the largest square keeps. Of all the great motte and bailey fortresses in Lincolnshire we find references only to Lincoln and Stamford, and such important places as Old Bolingbroke, Castle Bytham, and the group near the mouth of the Trent, are left out. Ludlow too, which Mr. St. John Hope has so fully investigated, is another striking omission, and we look in vain for such great places as Castle Rising and Clare.

In spite of minor blemishes and though it cannot be regarded as the last word on the subject, Mrs. Armitage has placed antiquaries under a great debt of obligation by compiling a book of real and permanent value and no student of the question can neglect it.

Mr. D. S. Montgomerie's plans are excellent, and are admirably reproduced.

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